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CAPITAL COMMENT

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The Langley File Turner Is in Trouble

Another wave of departures at the Central Intelligence Agency—many of them under pressure—has so outraged some senior officials that one of them, in only halfhearted jest, is advocating a “coup d'état” to topple Director Stansfield Turner.

Certainly Langley contains the classic ingredients for revolution: an autocratic and unpopular leadership, a demoralized citizenry, loss of pride, and bumbling performance.

The person being pushed by the intelligence community for Turner's chair is Frank Carlucci, his present deputy. A skilled bureaucrat, Carlucci is one of the few high-level Nixonites to retain power in the Carter administration. He first gained prominence as a troubleshooter in HEW, then luckily sat out the Watergate years as ambassador to Portugal, and came to the CIA in 1977.

Although Carlucci has no intelligence background, pros respect him as a talented administrator with the good sense to keep his hands off daily agency operations. “As director,” says one official, “Carlucci would be content to work as a manager and not try to play superspy.”

Turner commands no such re-

spect among intelligence careerists serving under him. He is blamed for the current brain-drain of resignations that is stripping the agency of what one person calls its “intellectual cadre.” The more than 300 resignations since January 1 include such key figures as William Christison, chief of the office of regional and political analysis; Vincent Heyman, chief of the operations center; and Sayre Stevens, deputy director of the National Foreign Assessment Center.

To insiders, these departures are even more serious than

Turner's “Halloween Massacre” in 1977, when he summarily fired, retired, or reassigned more than 800 clandestine operatives, many by terse form-letter.

“In 1977,” one official says, “Turner got rid of the spooks. This time he got rid of the brains.” Even loyalists concede the CIA was overloaded with Cold War-era covert officers. Yet they decry Turner's ouster of analysts responsible for refining the rivers of raw intelligence that flow in daily from agent and embassy reports, satellite pictures, and electronic intercepts.

Rightly or wrongly, the view within the CIA is that Turner is preoccupied with self-promotion. He wants to incorporate the Defense Intelligence Agency, the Pentagon's spy branch, into the CIA, and elevate the post of director of Central Intelligence to Cabinet rank.

Turner lost both these attempts during the last round of budget writing. But he continues to curry favor with the White House, and particularly with Zbigniew Brzezinski, Carter's national-security adviser. Turner is accused by subordinates of rewriting National Intelligence Estimates to avoid any SALT II or détente ripples. He is also said to have cut off the agency's Iranian desk from key message traffic during the Shah's final turbulent days. Defense Secretary Harold Brown, also knocked off the routing list, dispatched a spy of his own to pilfer a copy of one key cable from the National Security Council.

Prognosis: The intelligence community is capable of toppling an unwanted director—witness the hapless Theodore Sorensen. The same voices are now being raised, in quiet congressional offices and elsewhere, against Stansfield Turner. By fall, expect Jimmy Carter to see Turner as heavy baggage and find someplace else to send him.



Stansfield Turner



Frank Carlucci

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